

Local, state, and federal decision makers can ensure that low-income children and youth in California have year-round access to healthy, affordable meals. These leaders should prioritize the funding and operation of summertime academic and enrichment programming (where most summer meals have historically been served).

Below, we offer a summary of our recommendations for additional federal and state actions to close the summer nutrition gap. Background on each of these recommendations is available in the full *School's Out...Who Ate?* report at cfpa.net/sowa-2013.

Federal Policy Recommendations

1. Renew and Expand Summer EBT Demonstration Projects

Congress should invest in further exploration and expansion of the *Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children* demonstration projects.

2. Improve the Nutritional Quality of Summer Meals

Congress and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) should ensure that meals served through the Summer Food Service Program reflect the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

3. Understand the Reach of Summer Programming

Congress should commission a study to develop a state-by-state indicator of participation in summer learning, enrichment, and recreation programs that includes metrics assessing access to meals, whether federally or privately funded.

State Policy and Practice Recommendations

1. Leverage Schools as Trusted and Familiar Sites for Serving Meals

The California Department of Education (CDE) should encourage all school districts to make summer meals available on all campuses offering summer programming (regardless of whether that programming is sponsored by the district or by community partners). The summer meals offered on school campuses should be available and easily accessible to all children and youth in the surrounding community (not just those enrolled in programming).

2. Employ Adequate and Effective Promotion

CDE should establish and communicate the expectation that summer meal sponsors incorporate lessons learned from research (like a recent survey¹ by the national anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength) into promotional and outreach materials.

¹ <http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals/summer-meals-survey-findings>

Summary of Recommendations

CDE should intensify current efforts to communicate the expectation that all schools will inform students and families about nearby summer meal sites prior to the last day of school. This builds on requirements enacted via the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.²

CDE should work with sponsors to ensure that sites offer a “welcome packet” to first-time visitors as a means of introducing new participants to the summer meal program and in an effort to retain those participants.

3. Provide Timely, Easily Accessible Information About Summer Meal Sites

Each spring, CDE should proactively solicit information about which sites will be operating, particularly among the largest summer meal sponsors.

CDE should, to fullest possible extent, make information about summer meal sites that are open to all children and youth available through its online map each year before summer vacation begins.

4. Communicate Flexibility in Operating Summer Meal Programs

CDE should strongly encourage sponsors to utilize existing flexibility and options within the summer meal programs, such as first week site visit waivers, congregate feeding (hot weather) waivers, mobile feeding options, and flexibility around meal patterns.

5. Regularly Solicit Feedback from Sponsors and Sites

To best understand the challenges and successes experienced by summer meal providers, CDE should regularly solicit input from sponsors and site staff. The feedback provided should serve as a basis for state administrators, advocates, and other stakeholders to improve the reach and operation of the summer meal programs.

Additional Resources

For the full report and data tables, please visit: cfpa.net/sowa-2013

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² http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2011/SP15-2011_os.pdf